

OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE REV. PROF. EDWARD
HITCHCOCK, D.D., LL.D.

THIS distinguished member of the American Philosophical Society died near the close of last February. The following leading facts of his life, presented as dry chronological data, together with a general estimate of his character and labors, are chiefly drawn from a funeral discourse by Professor Tyler.

“Dr. Hitchcock was born at Deerfield, Massachusetts, in 1793; was principal of the academy in his native place from 1815 to 1818; entered the Congregational ministry in 1821, and continued the pastor of a church until 1825, when he was elected Professor of Chemistry and Natural History in Amherst College; he was appointed State Geologist of Massachusetts in 1830, and of the first district of New York in 1836; was chosen President of Amherst College and Professor of Natural Theology and Geology in 1844; was appointed Commissioner of Massachusetts, to examine the Agricultural Schools of Europe in 1850; retired from the Presidency of Amherst College in 1854; was appointed to complete the Geological Survey of Vermont in 1857; and continued to lecture in his Professorship of Natural Theology and Geology till the time of his death.”

Besides his membership in our Society, “his elections to membership in literary and scientific associations in his own country and in foreign lands, and his invitations to other fields and departments of labor which he did not feel at liberty to accept, were too numerous to be mentioned.”

“It is curious enough, that his first publication was a poem of five hundred lines, which appeared in 1815, on ‘The Downfall of Bonaparte.’ It drew attention to the youthful author, and also procured him some substantial benefits. His next appearance before the public was in quite another capacity, that of a mathematician and astronomer. The American republisher of the English Nautical Almanac offered ten dollars to any man who should discover an error. The young savant of Deerfield, then Principal of Deerfield Academy, sent him a list of forty-seven errors, and, on receiving only evasive answers, published the list. This drew forth a contemptuous reply, in which the critic who has presumed to arraign the editor of the Nautical Almanac, is spoken of as ‘one Edward Hitchcock.’ The calculations for the next year were revised with great care, but no sooner had the almanac appeared than that same Edward Hitchcock

dared to send out after it a list of errors more numerous than that of the previous year. And so the controversy went on, till the editor, discovering his mistake, changed his tone, and one Edward Hitchcock became first Mr. Edward Hitchcock, and at length due acknowledgment was made in the preface, of the editor's obligations to 'Edward Hitchcock, Esq., to whom much credit is due for the industry and talent bestowed on the work.' During the four years of his connection with Deerfield Academy, he went through every year all the calculations for the Farmer's Almanac, not excepting those for the weather, to which his imagination was as competent as his science was to calculate the eclipses and conjunctions."

"While in charge of his parish at Conway, he found exercise and recreation in making a scientific survey of the western counties of Massachusetts. This was the beginning of that life among the rocks and mountains, which was ever after a delight and almost a passion. Like the giant in classical mythology, whenever he could plant his feet on the bosom of his mother earth, he was in his element; it was his strength, his health, his life. This was also the origin of the geological survey of the entire State, which was afterwards made by the Government at his suggestion, and which has the honor of originating that rapid succession of scientific surveys in the several States, which has since done so much to develop the mineral and agricultural resources of our country."

"Thus the way was prepared for his appointment as the first Professor in the chair of Chemistry and Natural History in Amherst College. When he entered upon the duties of his office, the College was yet in its infancy. The chemical apparatus was then not worth ten dollars. Cabinet there was none. Not even a beginning had been made of those magnificent scientific collections which now adorn the College halls. For many years he was sole professor in all the departments of Natural History. He lectured and instructed in Chemistry, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, Zoology, Anatomy and Physiology, Natural Theology, and sometimes—to fill a temporary vacancy—he was the most suitable person the College could depute to teach also Natural Philosophy and Astronomy. Like Solomon, he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that groweth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. He spake also of rocks and soils, of which, so far as appears, Solomon did *not* speak. He dealt also in songs and proverbs, to say nothing of playing the Ecclesiastes in making sermons. He lived to see the departments of his original

professorship occupy, in whole or in part, the time of four men; the chemical laboratory and apparatus among the finest in the United States, and the scientific collections filling two spacious edifices; and all this the fruit, directly or indirectly, of his own enterprise, energy, and perseverance. Dr. Hitchcock created the *material* and the reputation of Amherst College in the Department of Natural History."

"He had the originality and creative power which belong to genius. He was made for a discoverer, for an originator of new ideas, new theories, new methods, new measures. He was tall enough to see over the heads of those around him, and catch the first dawning beams of a new day. He had more faith than most men in new discoveries. This believing disposition sometimes amounted to credulity, and welcomed a premature announcement, or a fabrication even, like the celebrated moon hoax; but it expected great things, attempted great things, and achieved great things, for science. It wrought miracles in the scientific world. He saw an element of truth in Phrenology, recognized some unknown and mysterious power in Animal Magnetism, or Mesmerism, as he more frequently called it; and in the true spirit of a philosopher, sought to extricate the truth and discover the power. As a Christian philosopher he welcomed every discovery in Geology and the physical sciences, never doubting that they would not only harmonize with, but illustrate and confirm, the Sacred Scriptures. Technology, as a science, began, and as yet may almost be said to end, with him. He was the originator of the State Scientific Surveys. The American Scientific Association is said to have sprung from his suggestion; and he was its first President. He possessed in a remarkable degree that power of rapid and wide generalization, by which the fall of an apple suggested to Newton the law of universal gravitation. Taught by a few terraces on the hillsides, he could reconstruct the Connecticut Valley at each successive geological epoch of its existence; and guided by a few footmarks in the sandstone, he could repeople it with its various orders and tribes of primeval inhabitants. If he had not been a great geologist and naturalist, he would have been a great astronomer and mathematician. The question which he should be, turned, not on the faculties with which he was endowed, but on the accident, or rather the providence, of his impaired health and eyesight."

"In addition to the engrossing labors of a professorship combining several distinct departments, or of the presidency, combined with a professorship quite sufficient of itself to employ one man, and besides

the innumerable special plans and efforts to raise funds, build cabinets, and make scientific collections, he has published to the world more than twenty books, of all sizes, from small duodecimos to large quartos, besides innumerable articles in the daily, weekly, and quarterly literary, scientific, or theological journals, amounting in all to eight thousand pages. Several of these books, besides numerous editions in this country, have been republished in Europe, and won for him a world-wide reputation."—(Thus far chiefly in the words of Prof. Tyler.)

But after all, Dr. Hitchcock was not so much a great genius, or a great savant, as a great and good man.

There are two characteristic and salient traits in his scientific history, to which it may not be amiss to draw special attention. The first is, that, like Newton, he always held science and religion together, not in antagonism, but in co-ordination and harmony. The second is, that, like Franklin, he combined his scientific pursuits with a steady and zealous devotion to the duties and utilities of practical life.

However engrossed by his favorite geological studies, he was still a Christian believer; and there was no subject of investigation of greater interest with him than to trace out the harmony between faith and reason, between nature and revelation, between the discoveries of science and the disclosures of the Bible. In this he differed from many scientific men of the present time; and thus, perhaps, he even lost caste in the view of some, and came to be regarded as weak or narrow-minded, or deficient in scientific force and freedom. Had he ignored or even assailed the Bible, his scientific reputation, his character as an independent thinker, inquirer, and discoverer, might perhaps have stood higher than they now do. Besides those who think that modern discoveries and the "positive philosophy," have at length demolished the Bible, there are many more who think that, at least, science has nothing at all to do with the Bible, either for it or against it.

Here we find two extreme parties. On the one hand, too many religious men and religious teachers are in the habit of denying and anathematizing science, or treating it with vituperation and scorn, as if it were the natural enemy of Christianity, the fountain of error and infidelity, of impiety and atheism. And on the other hand, scientific men have by no means been wanting, who have been ready, on every occasion, to make a thrust at the Christian Scriptures, showing up their alleged blunders and scientific ineptitudes; or, ignoring their

existence altogether, coolly to take their falsehood for granted, and pass by their testimony in silence, while propounding theories and doctrines in palpable antagonism with their received and accredited teaching.

With neither of these parties did Dr. Hitchcock have any sympathies; and in this he showed the truest scientific as well as religious instinct. For not only is anti-scientific bigotry suicidal for the religious teacher, but anti-christian bigotry is equally so for the scientific inquirer.

Is it true that Science is simply to mind her own business and let the Bible take care of itself? This is, perhaps, the prevailing tone of the scientific world. But is such a view philosophical? Is such a position tenable—*scientifically* tenable? So far as Science restricts herself to the discovery, the orderly digesting, and historical statement of *facts*, it is all well. She need not trouble herself about the Bible; just as she need not trouble herself about ethics or mathematics. But the moment she proceeds to enunciate a theory, to draw inferences from her facts, to dogmatize, she is not at liberty coolly to announce as verities or even as probabilities, doctrines which stand in flagrant contradiction to other facts and other truths resting upon appropriate and commonly received evidence,—and that, too, without attempting to refute, or even so much as alluding to, those other alleged facts and truths, or to the evidence on which they repose. Such a procedure cannot claim to be either philosophical or scientific. Science must aim at a harmony of truth, at a unity of conception. No truth, no evidence lies beyond her sphere. If she reject any facts, if she neglect any testimony, she undermines the very foundations of her whole edifice. It is not narrow-mindedness but large-mindedness, which leads a true philosopher to take into his account all the facts and all the evidence from all sources and of every kind, before drawing his definitive conclusion.

It seems to be too often forgotten that there is *real evidence* for the truth of the Christian religion, and for the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and consequently for the truth of whatever they teach,—evidence of facts and testimony,—evidence, taken as a whole, of vastly greater compass and weight than there is for any scientific dogma whatever, which stands in contradiction to the Bible or any of its contents,—evidence which cannot be annihilated or rebutted by being simply ignored,—evidence which, until it is fairly and directly met and refuted, stands firm, and will stand firm forever.—(Vid. Rev. of Lyell's *Antiquity of Man*, in the *Am. Theol. and Presb. Quart. Rev.*, April, 1864.)

Dr. Hitchcock did not pursue his studies as a man of scientific leisure. He did more than one man's work as a Professor and College President. He was the head and heart and soul of Amherst College,—its real father and founder. He made it and left it what it is. Nor did the College absorb all his practical energies. He took a deep interest and an active part in the cause of popular education, and particularly of female education. Sympathy for the masses conspired with his zeal for the promotion of Christian culture to interest him deeply in all the early plans and efforts for the establishment of the celebrated Mount Holyoke Seminary. "All the principles and methods in which it should be founded and conducted were discussed with him and other friends of learning and religion at his house; and when, at length, they were sufficiently matured, his tongue and his pen were among the chief organs for communicating them to the public. And from that time to the day of his death, next to Amherst College, Mount Holyoke Seminary was the child of his affections and the object of his constant watch and care."

In active efforts also for the suppression of intemperance, he took a zealous and prominent share. And, whatever may be thought of the special plans or processes of some of the friends of the so-called Temperance movement, surely no one can witness the multiform evils and mighty woes brought upon the community by the intemperate use of intoxicating drinks, and wonder that a man of moral principle and Christian character, of humane instincts and almost feminine sensibility, should have had his spirit stirred within him to seek some remedy, to put forth some effort, for the removal of such a prolific source of evil, for the eradication of such a loathsome and deadly cancer from the bosom of society.

Amidst all his studies and avocations, Dr. Hitchcock never forgot his relation to the Church of Christ and his character as a Christian minister. He was punctual, diligent and zealous in the discharge of every religious duty.

Nor did he forget his obligations to his country. He was a stern patriot, a loyal man, and a good citizen.

He was a Christian; but his type of a Christian was not a monk; he was religious, but not what the French call *un religieux*; he was devout, but not a *dévôt*.

He was a Christian minister; but his ideal of a Christian minister was neither the mere functional priest, nor the mere professional preacher, nor both combined. In becoming a Christian and a clergyman he had not ceased to be a man, and to be interested in whatever

is addressed to human intelligence and human sympathy by the God of Nature and of Providence, and by the actual condition, the wants and the welfare, and the manifold activities and relations of mankind.

He was a scientific man, but not that alone. In recognizing the relations of his intellect to nature, he did not allow himself to become so absorbed in them as to forget the higher relations of mind and heart to God, and the broader and the closer relations of both to society.

In the imminent danger of his country, he was no mere ingenious Archimedes. He never would have met an irruption of hostile and triumphant soldiery into his house with a "*nolite turbare circulos meos.*" He was no literary recluse. He had no affinity of character with such a man as Joseph Scaliger. He could not have been so engrossed in the study of Homer as not to have been aware of such a scene as the massacre of St. Bartholomew's eve, or of his own hair-breadth escape from the common butchery, until the day subsequent to the catastrophe.

He observed, he studied, he thought, he felt, he acted; but he was no mere observer, no mere student, no mere thinker, no mere sentimentalist, no mere agitator or drudge, no mere fragment of humanity, however sharp, or polished, or brilliant. He was a whole-souled, large-minded, living man, recognizing his practical relations to man and God, as well as his intellectual relations to nature and truth. His highest ambition and most fervent prayer undoubtedly were, to be a true man and an earnest Christian, rather than a *savan* or a philosopher, to have his name written among the wise who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, rather than emblazoned on the records of human science and learning. To him, as to Solomon, God gave more than he asked.

PHILADELPHIA, November 18, 1864.

The death of Dr. Heinrich Rose was announced by the Secretary, as having taken place at Berlin on the 27th of January last, at the age of sixty-eight years and five months.

The minutes of the last Stated Meeting of the Board of Officers and Council were read.

And the Society was adjourned.